

For the Children

THE STRANGE LITTLE VISITOR.

Little Florence Wilson lived in the country. There were no little girls near enough for her to play with; so she made friends of all the animals on her father's farm. The calves and lambs and puppies and kittens all knew her, and were always ready for a frolic. The little chickens followed her wherever she went.

But of all the pets the little girl had, she loved best her pony, her dear, dear Sheltie. He was gentle as a lamb and playful as a kitten. He was never too tired to gallop down to the brook or out to the hayfield with his little mistress on his back. And once he brought her a queer little guest.

One morning when Mr. Wilson came up to the house for his breakfast he found Florence seated on a stump beneath the apple tree feeding her chickens. They were not the least bit afraid of her, and perched contentedly on her wrists or flew to her shoulders. There they pecked at her curls as if they thought they might be good to eat.

She made a very pretty picture with her chickens nestling about her and her curls tumbled over her face. So her papa thought, and he walked very softly that he might not disturb her. But when she saw him, she scattered her pets and ran to meet him.

"I have a new pet for you, Florence," he said when they were seated at the table.

"What is it?" she asked, looking up with sparkling eyes.

"Guess," said papa, teasingly.

"Is it a kitten?" Florence queried.

"No; you have six already. Guess once more."

"Then I guess it's a rabbit."

"A rabbit to nibble my fruit trees? You are wrong again."

"Then I think it must be a nice white hen, like my Snowball, who stole her nest."

But papa shook his head.

Florence thought hard for a moment; then she said: "Is it a puppy?"

"No," said papa. "It came down on Sheltie's back. He was out in the wood lot last night."

On Sheltie's back? What could it be? Florence thought and thought; but she could not guess. So after breakfast she went out to the stable, where Sheltie stood in his stall munching his oats. And there on his back perched a sleepy little owl.

He stared at Florence with his big round eyes as if he was saying: "Who are you, little girl, and what kind of a nest is this?"

Florence laughed at this odd little guest, who did not seem to be afraid of her. She even ventured to smooth the feathers on his head, as she would have done with Snowball or any of her feathered pets.

"I believe he is hungry and wants his breakfast," she said to herself. "Poor little traveler! I think I will call him Screechie."

He would not touch the food she brought him, although she tried her best to coax him to eat. And at last she gave up in despair.

"He is sleepy," her papa explained. "He goes to bed in the daytime, and at night he is ready to hunt for his

food. His eyes are very much like your kitten's."

"Where do you suppose Sheltie found him?" asked Florence.

"In the woods somewhere, I imagine," her papa answered.

"Perhaps he fell out of the nest; or in the dim gray light of the morning he may have thought Sheltie's back a very comfortable roost and fallen asleep on it. Now he does not know what to think of the queer place he is in."

"Poor little Screechie!" Florence said gently. "I wish he would stay and be my birdie. Wouldn't he, papa, if I kept him in Dickie's cage and fed him well?"

"You could not keep him long, Florence," papa answered. "He would soon outgrow Dickie's cage. Then just think how lonely he would be, so far away from all his brothers and sisters. At night he will go back to the woods."

So Screechie went back to the nest in the hollow tree, and lived to be a very old owl. He was greatly respected by the other birds of his family, for it was understood that he once took a long journey to a distant land. And although Florence watched eagerly to see if he would not come back again on Sheltie's back, he never did.—Boys and Girls.

THE LOST LETTER.

"Let's play school," said Gilbert, when the weather was too stormy to allow them to be out of doors. "That's lots of fun."

"We can't do this," whispered Edith in a few minutes. "Molly doesn't know how."

"I don't want to play school," said Molly. "I can't."

"Let's get out our work," said Joseph. "You girls can sew, and we'll finish our kites."

"Molly can't sew," said Jessie, quickly. "We'll have to find something she likes, 'cause she's the guest."

"It's all 'Molly can't! Molly can't!'" said Robert, who was also a guest. "We always have to stop and think every time if Molly likes the games."

Molly was a very spoiled little girl; but she had no mother, and her nurse allowed her to do exactly as she pleased. Though she was eight years old, she had never had lessons, and liked to do nothing but play. Now she was visiting her little cousins, and there were many things they liked to do that she knew nothing about. Just as they were talking some one called Molly to the parlor, and the children played school and had their sewing and work while she was out of the nursery.

"Did you do this?" asked Molly, coming back to find Edith putting the finishing touches to a pretty dress for her doll.

"Yes; that isn't anything," said Edith. "I like to do it."

"And you are a whole year younger than I am," said Molly.

"Look at my tables, Cousin Molly," said little Robert. "See! Here on the blackboard."

Molly looked, and then she sat down to cry bitterly. "You can all do so many things," she said, "and I am just a dunce. I can't do anything."

But Molly was wrong. They all helped her, and the governess taught her many lessons; so that before she went home she was much happier. "Papa, I want